

F864  
B97

1858



0 017 167 265 A



F 864  
.B97  
Copy 1

---

CALIFORNIA,  
ITS  
CHARACTERISTICS AND PROSPECTS.

---

[*From the New Englander for February, 1858.*]

---

*AS.*

*26. Mai 1858.*



---

# CALIFORNIA,

ITS

CHARACTERISTICS AND PROSPECTS.

---

*[From the New Englander for February, 1858.]*

---

## CALIFORNIA, ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND PROSPECTS.

WHOEVER wishes, for health's sake or for any other reason, to change the sceneries or the objects and associations of his life, should set off, not for Europe, but for California. And this the more certainly, if he is a loving and sharp observer of nature; for nature meets us here in moods entirely new; so that we have even to make her acquaintance over again; going back, as it were, to be started in a fresh childhood. All our common, or previously formed impressions, calculations and weather-wisdoms are at fault. We find that we really understand nothing and have everything to learn. We begin to imagine, for example, that her way is to be thus, or thus; or that her operations are to be solved in this, or that manner, but we very soon discover that it will not hold. Our guess must be given up and we must try again. A person who is at all curious, in the study of natural phenomena, will be held in a puzzle thus for whole months, and will nearly complete the cycle of the year, before he seems to himself to have come into any real understanding with the new world he is in; just as if he were on a visit to Jupiter and wanted to sail round the sun with him, for at least once, and feel out his year, before he can be sure that he understands a single day.

California being to this extent a new world, having its own combinations, characters, and colors, it is not to be supposed that we can make any reader acquainted with it by words of description. The most we can hope to accomplish is, that by giving some notes on its physical and social characteristics, we may excite a more curious and possibly a more intelligent interest in California life, and the certainly great scenes preparing to be revealed in that far off, outside, isolated state of the Republic. It is not to be supposed that every particular representation or suggestion we may offer will be verified by the experiments and exact observations of science, or by the tests of moral and economical statistics; we only look on with

our mere eyes, giving our impressions, and venturing what guesses and possible explications may occur to us.

The first and most difficult thing to apprehend respecting California is the climate, upon which, of course, depend the advantages of health and physical development, the growths and their conditions and kinds, and the *modus operandi*, or general cast, of the seasons. But this, again, is scarcely possible, without dismissing, first of all, the word *climate*, and substituting the plural, climates. For it cannot be said of California, as of New England, or the Middle States, that it has a climate. On the contrary, it has a great multitude, curiously pitched together, at short distances, one from another, defying too, not seldom, our most accepted notions of the effects of latitude and altitude and the defenses of mountain ranges. The only way, therefore, is to dismiss generalities, cease to look for a climate, and find, if we can, by what process the combinations and varieties are made; for when we get hold of the manner and going on of causes, all the varieties are easily reducible.

To make this matter intelligible, conceive that middle California, the region of which we now speak, lying between the head waters of the two great rivers, and about four hundred and fifty or five hundred miles long from north to south, is divided lengthwise, parallel to the coast, into three strips, or ribands of about equal width. First, the coast-wise region, comprising two, three, and sometimes four parallel tiers of mountains from five hundred to four thousand, five thousand, or even ten thousand feet high. Next, advancing inward, we have a middle strip, from fifty to seventy miles wide, of almost dead plain, which is called the great valley; down the scarcely perceptible slopes of which, from north to south, and south to north, run the two great rivers, the Sacramento and the San Joaquin, to join their waters at the middle of the basin and pass off to the sea. The third long strip, or riband, is the slope of the Sierra Nevada chain, which bounds the great valley on the east, and contains in its foot-hills, or rather in its lower half, all the gold mines. The upper half is, to a

great extent, bare granite rock, and is crowned, at the summit, with snow, about eight months of the year.

Now the climate of these parallel strips will be different almost of course, and subordinate, local differences, quite as remarkable, will result from subordinate features in the local configurations, particularly of the seaward strip or portion. For all the varieties of climate, distinct as they become, are made by variations wrought in the rates of motion, the courses, the temperature, and the dryness of a single wind; viz, the trade wind of the summer months, which blows directly inward all the time, only with much greater power during that part of the day when the rarefaction of the great central valley comes to its aid; that is from about ten o'clock in the morning, to the setting of the sun. Conceive such a wind, chilled by the cold waters that have come down from the Northern Pacific, perhaps from Behring Straits, combing the tops and wheeling round through the valleys of the coast-wise mountains, crossing the great valley at a much retarded rate, and growing hot and dry, fanning gently the foot-hills and sides of the Sierra, still more retarded by the piling necessary to break over into Utah, and the conditions of the California climate, or climates, will be understood with general accuracy. Greater simplicity in the matter of climate is impossible, and greater variety is hardly to be imagined.

For the whole dry season, viz, from May to November, this wind is in regular blast, day by day, only sometimes approaching a little more nearly to a tempest than at others. It never brings a drop of rain, however thick and rain-like the clouds it sometimes drives before it. The cloud element, indeed, is always in it. Sometimes it is floated above, in the manner commonly designated by the term cloud. Sometimes, as in the early morning, when the wind is most quiet, it may be seen as a kind of fog bank resting on the sea-wall mountains, or rolling down landward through the interstices of their summits. When the wind begins to hurry and take on less composedly, the fog becomes blown fog, a kind of lead dust driven through the air, reducing it from a transparent to a semi-transparent or merely translucent state, so that if any



one looks up the bay, from a point twenty or thirty miles south of San Francisco, in the afternoon, he will commonly see, directly abreast of the Golden Gate where this wind drives in with its greatest power, a pencil of the lead dust shooting upwards at an angle of thirty or forty degrees, (which is the aim of the wind preparing to leap the second chain of mountains, the other side of the bay,) and finally tapering off and vanishing, at a mid-air point eight or ten miles inland, where the increased heat of the atmosphere has taken up the moisture, and restored its complete transparency. This wind is so cold, that one who will sit upon the deck of the afternoon steamer passing up the Bay, will even require his heaviest winter clothing. And so rough are the waters of the Bay, land-locked and narrow as it is, that sea-sickness is a kind of regular experience, with such as are candidates for that kind of felicity.

We return now to the middle strip of the great valley where the engine, or rather boiler power, that operates the coast wind in a great part of its velocity, is located. Here the heat, reverberated as in a forge, or oven (whence *Cali—fornia*) becomes, even in the early spring, so much raised that the ground is no longer able, by any remaining cold there is in it, to condense the clouds, and rain ceases. A little further on in the season, there is not cooling influence enough left to allow even the phenomena of cloud, and for weeks together, not a cloud will be seen, unless, by chance, the skirt of one may just appear now and then, hanging over the summit of the western mountains. The sun rises, fixing his hot stare on the world, and stares through the day. Then he returns as in an orrery, and stares through another, in exactly the same way. The thermometer will go up, not seldom, to 100° or even 110°, and judging by what we know of effects here in New England, we should suppose that life would scarcely be supportable. And yet there is much less suffering from heat in this valley than with us, for the reason probably that the nights are uniformly cool. The thermometer goes down regularly with the sun, and one or two blankets are wanted for the comfort of the night. This cooling of the night is probably determined by the fact that the cool sea wind, sweeping through the

upper air of the valley, from the coast mountains on one side, over the mountains and mountain passes of the Sierra on the other, is not able to get down to the ground of the valley during the day, because of the powerfully steaming column of heat that rises from it; but as soon as the sun goes down, it drops immediately to the level of the plain, bathing it for the night with a kind of perpendicular sea breeze, that has lost for the time a great part of its lateral motion. The consequence is that no one is greatly debilitated by the heat. On the contrary, it is the general testimony, that a man can do as much of mental or bodily labor in this climate, as in any other. And it is a good confirmation of this opinion, that horses will here maintain a wonderful energy, traveling greater distances, complaining far less of heat, and sustaining their spirit a great deal better than with us. It is also to be noted that there is no special tendency to fevers in this hot region, except in what is called the *tule* bottom, a kind of giant bulrush region, along the most depressed and marshiest portions of the rivers.

Passing now to the eastern strip or portion, the slope of the Nevada, the heat, except in those deep cañons where the reverberation makes it sometimes even insupportable, is qualified in degree, according to the altitude. A gentle west wind, heated in the lower parts or foothills by the heat of the valley, fans it all day. At points which are higher the wind is cooler. Here also, on the slope of the Nevada, the nights are always cool in summer, so cool that the late and early frosts leave too short a space for the ordinary summer crop to mature, even where the altitude is not more than 3,000 or 4,000 feet. Meantime, at the top of the Sierra, where the west wind, piling up from below, breaks over into Utah, travelers undertake to say that, in some of the passes it blows with such stress as even to polish the rocks, by the gravel and sand which it drives before it. The day is cloudless on the slope of the Sierra, as in the valley, but on the top there is now and then, or once in a year or two, a moderate thunder shower. With this exception, as referring to a part uninhabitable, thunder is scarcely ever heard in California. The principal thunders of California are underground.

We return now to the coast-wise mountain region, where the multiplicity and confusion of climates is most remarkable. Their variety we shall find depends on the courses of the wind currents, turned hither and thither by the mountains; partly also on the side any given place occupies of its valley or mountain; and partly on the proximity of the sea. Sprinkled in among these mountains, and more or less inclosed by them, are valleys, large and small, of the highest beauty. But a valley in California means something more than a scoop, or depression. It means a rich land-lake, leveled between the mountains, with a sharply defined, picturesque shore, where it meets the sides and runs into the indentations of the mountains. What is called the Bay of San Francisco, is a large salt water lake in the middle of a much larger land-lake, sometimes called the San Jose valley. It extends south of the city forty miles, and northward among islands and mountains, about twenty-five more, if we include what is called the San Pablo Bay. Three beautiful valleys of agricultural country, the Petaluma, Sonoma, and Napa valleys, open into this larger valley of the Bay on the north end of it, between four mountain barriers, having each a short navigable creek or inlet. Still farther north is the Russian River valley, opening towards the sea, and the Clear Lake valley and region, which is the Switzerland of California. East of the San Jose valley, too, at the foot of Diablo, and up among the mountains, are the large Amador and San Ramon valleys, also the little gem of the Siñole. Now these valleys, which if we except the great valley of the two rivers, comprise the plow-land of middle California, have each a climate of its own, and productions that correspond. We have only to observe further, that the east side of any valley will commonly be much warmer than the west; for the very paradoxical reason that the cold coast-wind always blows much harder on the side or steep slope even, of a mountain, opposite or away from the wind, than it does on the side towards it, reversing all our notions of the sheltering effects of mountain ridges.

Nothing will so fatally puzzle a stranger as the observing of this fact; for he will doubt a long time, first, whether it be a

fact, and then, what possible account to make of it. Crossing the Golden Gate in a small steamer, for example, to Sausalito, whence the water is brought for the city, he will look for a quiet shelter to the little craft, apparently in danger of foundering, when it comes under the lee of that grand mountain wall that almost overhangs the water on the west. But he is surprised, when he arrives, to find the wind blowing straight down the face of it, harder even than elsewhere, gouging into the water by a visible depression, and actually raising caps of white within a single rod of the shore. In San Francisco itself, he will find the cold coast-wind pouring down over the western barrier with uncomfortable rawness, when returning from a ride at Point Lobos, on the very beach of the sea, where the air was comparatively soft and quiet. So, crossing the Sonoma valley, he will come out into it from the west, through a cold, windy gorge, to find orange trees growing in Gen. Vallejo's garden, close under the eastern valley wall, as finely as in Cuba. In multitudes of places too on the eastward slopes of the mountains, he will notice that the trees, which have, all, their growth in the coast-wind season, have their tops thrown over, like cock's tails turned away from the wind. After he has been sufficiently perplexed, and stumbled by these facts, he will finally strike upon the reason, viz, that this cold, trade wind, being once lifted or driven over the seawall mountains, and being specifically heavier than the atmosphere into which it is going, no sooner passes the summit than it pitches down as a cold cataract, with the uniformly accelerated motion of falling bodies. Then, as a confirmation, it will occur to him perhaps, that he has been seeing it demonstrated all summer long, from his residence on the opposite, or eastern side of the Bay; where, during all the fore part of the day, and sometimes for the whole afternoon, he has noticed a fog cap, or cloud rolling over the distant top of the western mountain, and driving more than half-way down the hither side of it, before it has caught sun enough or heat enough to become transparent.

Having gotten the understanding of this fact, many things are made plain. For example, in traveling down the western

side of the Bay from San Francisco to San Jose, and passing directly under the mountain range just referred to, he has found himself passing through as many as four or five distinct climates; for, when abreast of some gap or depression in the western wall, the heavy wind has poured down with a chilling coldness, making even an overcoat desirable, though it be a clear, summer day; and then, when he is abreast of some high summit, which the fog-wind sweeps by, and therefore need not pass over, a sweltering and burning heat is felt, in which the lightest summer clothing is more than enough. He has also observed that directly opposite the Golden Gate, at Oakland, and the Alameda point, where the central column of this wind might be supposed to press most uncomfortably, the land is covered with growths of evergreen oak, standing fresh and erect, while north and south, on either side, scarcely a tree is to be seen for many miles; a mystery that is now explained by the fact that the wind, driving here square against the Contra Costa or second range, is piled and gets no current, till it slides off north and south from the point of quiet here made; which also is confirmed by the fact, that, in riding down from San Pablo on the north, he has the wind in his face, finds it slacken as he approaches Oakland, and passing on still southward to San Leandro, has it blowing at his back.

The varieties, and even what appeared to be the incredible anomalies of the California climates, begin at last to be more intelligible. The remarkable contrast, for example, between the climates of Benicia and Martinez is clearly accounted for. These two places, only a mile and a half apart, on opposite sides of the straits of Carquinez, and connected by a ferry, like two points on a river, are yet more strikingly contrasted, in their summer climates, than Charleston and Quebec. Thus the Golden Gate column, wheeling upon Oakland, as just now described, sweeps along the face of the Contra Costa chain in its northward course, setting the few tree tops of San Pablo aslant, as weather vanes stuck fast by rust, and drives its cold sea-dust full in the face of Benicia. Meantime, at Martinez, close under the end of the mountain which has



turned the wind directly by, and is itself cloven down here to let the straits of Carquinez pass through, the sun shines hot and with an almost dazzling clearness, and all the characters of the climate belong rather to the great valley caldron, whose rim it may be said is here.

Equally plain now is the solution of those apparent inversions of latitude which, at first, perplex the stranger. In the region about Marysville, for example, he is overtaken by a fierce sweltering heat in April, and scarcely hears, perhaps, in the travel of a day, a single bird sing, as if meaning it for a song. He descends by steamer to San Francisco, and thence to San Jose, making a distance in all of more than two hundred miles, where he finds a cool, spring-like freshness in the air, and hears the birds screaming with song even more vehemently than in New England. It is as if he had passed out of a tropical into a temperate climate; when, in fact, he is due south of Marysville by the whole distance passed over. But the mystery is all removed by the discovery, that instead of keeping in the great valley, he broke out of it through the straits of Carquinez into the Bay valley, and the cold bath atmosphere of the coast-wise mountains; that now he is in fact within twenty miles of the sea, separated from it only by a single wall, while at Marysville, he was more than a hundred miles from the sea, with four or five high mountain tiers between.

Thus much for the summer climate of California. The winter climate is the trade wind reversed. The Sierra is covered now with snows of incredible depth at the top, and they extend even down to its foot, whitening also not seldom, the great valley, which is much colder, at this season, than the coast-mountain region. Temperature, in short, is inverted, just as the winds are. The temperature in San Francisco, for example ranges generally between  $60^{\circ}$  and  $70^{\circ}$ , as in the summer between  $65^{\circ}$  and  $80^{\circ}$ ; though the cold of experience will be scarcely greater in the winter than in the summer, because, in winter, the air is comparatively still, and in summer adds a cooling effect by its motion. Probably there is not a more even climate in the world. Now and then the thermometer

will sink low enough, at night, to produce a thin scale of ice, but geraniums will be seen in full blossom, on the terraces of the gardens, throughout the winter.

It is hardly necessary to say that this westward return of the trade winds brings the rainy season. All the rain of the year is from it. It sometimes blows too with terrific violence and pours even cascades of rain for whole days together, producing immense floods; though generally the whole amount of rain which it brings is much too small, for the supply of the springs and the due moistening of the soil for the year. It is not to be understood that what is called the rainy season is a season of continual rain. It is scarcely more rainy, if at all, than our three autumnal months. And at about the mid-point of the season, or in the month of February, there is commonly a suspension, which separates what may be called the early from the latter rain, as in Palestine. This month of February is, in fact, the most lovely and, in many respects, the most beautiful month of the year. The green of the landscape is then freshest, the air is soft, the sky clear, the roads neither wet nor dusty—all the conditions of comfort and beauty meet, to crown it as the June of the Pacific.

If now it should appear that we have spent too much time on the winds and meteorologic phenomena of California, it is sufficient to answer, that while such an impression would be right if New England were the subject, it is not right when the subject is California. The winds of our Eastern shore are a confused mixture, of which nothing can be predicated with certainty, except the uncertainty of the weather. The Pacific winds, on the other hand, are very nearly calculable quantities; and by them are determined, to a great degree, the temperature of places, the rains, the seasons, the almost uniform salubrity of the country, (for with all its varieties there is probably no healthier region on the globe,) the growths also, as respects both their rates and kinds, and further still, the immense commercial advantages; for California, as we shall by and by see, is elected for the great metropolitan centre of the commerce of the Pacific, quite as much by its winds, as by the magnificent harbor, whose Gate is here set open, to let the ships

fly in, as doves to their windows, from all the seas of the world. The gold of California, taken as a determining cause and physical endowment of its future, is not once to be compared with its winds. They are more necessary, by a thousand times, to the greatness of California than the mines. If any one judges, from our description, that they are too cold, or too strong, or too much laden with moisture, he will greatly mistake. If they were warmer, softer and more dry on the coast, even by a few degrees, it would greatly injure the country and might even be a fatal blight on its prospects. Indeed, if California has any prospects, it is just because the light baffling winds, or rather no winds of the coast below, are here displaced by such blasts as have power to drive across its whole width and fan it with their cooling breath. Otherwise its rich valleys and lowlands would be arid deserts, its shores and rivers reeking places of disease, and even its mining region too hot to be worked or even inhabited, in the summer months.

Having gotten our advantage therefore, in a due understanding of the winds and the climate of California, our description may now proceed more rapidly. The scenery of California depends partly on the surfaces and partly on the seasons. It differs from our Eastern shore, in the fact that it is made up of concave or scooped surfaces, flowing into convex summits or rounded surfaces, only to a very limited extent; all the valleys being plains, or land-lakes, with definite indented shores, like shores of water. It differs also from the western prairies and the plains of the south, where the horizon is sunk and the sky becomes a small inverted bowl, in the fact that every spot, even in the widest of the valleys, has a mountain wall and horizon visible in the distance, which props the sky and lifts the vault of it, giving a look of airiness and expansion, and connecting impressions even of grandeur and beauty. Mountain and plain, plain and mountain, stretching generally coastwise in their figure, make up the rough calico of the surface. Sometimes the mountains are bare, or nearly so, showing a mottled look in the distance, where the sun, glancing down their sides, burnishes the points and casts a shade on the hollows. Here



the cattle on a thousand hills are no figure ; for the hills are pastures, covered many of them with a rich growth of grass and wild oats even to the top, and the cattle paths, beaten like shelve rows into their steep sides, just save them apparently from sliding off into the abysses, making every rod of pasture accessible and permitting them finally to emerge, as the triumph of their engineering instinct, on summits 2,000, or even 3,000 feet high, where they are seen from below, in clean relief on the sky. Sometimes again the mountain sides are covered with a dense chaparral, appearing in the distance just as they would if darkened by a forest ; save that, now and then, the chaparral is of a most intense, transparently green color, showing a summit that emerges into the sun, when surrounded by the driving clouds below, like a huge pile of emerald. Sometimes the distant summits are seen to be covered with a growth of redwoods, that stand posted there as giant sentinels, every trunk distinctly visible, and all together, 200 or 300 feet high, combing the sky in dark relief upon it, giving to the horizon thus a most peculiar look of spirit and majesty. The lower half of the Sierra Nevada, comprising the foot hills and the whole mining region, is covered extensively with a timber growth of pines, cedars and other evergreens. The upper half is bald, ragged granite, the highest peaks of which are covered a great part of the year with snow. All the mountains differ from those of the east, in the fact that they are seamed or furrowed from the tops downward, every few rods, by a ravine or water course. These ravines are many of them dry in the summer, though generally, or at least frequently, displaying a green line of shrubbery and trees in their course, which makes them very conspicuous from a distance ; especially when the mountains are bare on their general surface. These ravines, too, are often cut miles deep into the hills, becoming immense chasms, cañons or gorges, out of which all the earth has been swept, to fill the rich valley bottom and make up the land-lake deposit of the plain. All the mountains accordingly are flanked by spurs with intervening gorges, and these again by spurs, and these again by the same ; so that, standing on the side of some grand amphitheatre, the spectator may some-

times see that he is on the spur of a spur, even in the fifth degree ; all of which spurs are run together, like pig iron castings in a furnace, only with a more disorderly complication. Hence, too, the impossibility in California, as we may here remark in passing, that any railroad should ever get over a mountain, as with us, by skirting along its sides till it has made the ascent ; for such a line would be cut by the side cañons, or gorges, from a hundred to a thousand or even two thousand feet deep, every half mile. There is no way but to follow up the bottom of some great cañon, or river gorge, till it becomes too steep, and escape by a tunnel ; or else to find some spur whose back can be ascended, and keep it to the top.

From these general descriptions of the surface it will be naturally inferred that there is a great deal, both of beautiful and of grand scenery, in California. Few countries are richer in their varieties, and none more peculiar in all. Here sleeps in quiet, earthly beauty the rich vale of Sonoma, backed in rough grandeur by the towering Diabolo, a picture in a frame. Here in the deep chasm or angle that foots the Yo Hamite Falls, a river is beheld pitching off a summit 2,400 feet high, and by two leaps reaching the bottom ; type, as it were, of heaven's mercy pouring from the sky. Here on the other hand, at the Geysers, in the cracking, cannonading, whistling and roaring of steam, and the spouting of hot mud, and the brimstone fumes of the place, we look on a field, under which we may well enough imagine the infernals, sweltering and tearing, as it were, diabolically, to break loose. At the Big Trees, we enter a dell, quietly lapped in the mountains, where the majestic vegetable minarets are crowded, as in some city of pilgrimage ; there to look up, for the first time, in silent awe of the mere life principle.

The scene of the city and bay, from the high background of the city, is one that any lover of nature might travel far to see. The same reversed, from the east side of the bay, at Clinton, is more remarkable. In the unalterable green foreground, are the oaks of Oakland and the Alameda ; here and there flows in a strip or armlet of water ; next comes the Bay, in the middle, with its picturesque islands ; beyond are the

city, and the open Gate showing the Farralone Islands far off at sea ; right and left, each side of the Gate, the grand sea-wall of mountains stretches north and south, for a background, at least fifty miles—it is not the bay of Naples, the dreamy softness and quiet luxury are not here, but with more severity, the scene unites a higher spirit and a beauty as much more impressive and brilliant. The Gate itself, cleaving down the mountains, to let the commerce of the Great Ocean of the world pass in, has a look of destiny in it strong enough to be sublime.

There is a little valley owned by a wealthy and respectable Spanish Californian, Mr. Suñole, which is commonly called by his name, and is occupied as a pasture ground or ranch for his herds. It lies over among the Contra Costa, or second range of mountains east of Mission San Jose, and is entered by a pass some four hundred feet above the valley bottom, which comprises about a thousand acres. Through this valley bottom runs a clear, rapid stream, which, in the spring, would be called a river, and which, wheeling round to the northwest, cuts the mountain to its base, dashing through one of the wildest gorges that can be conceived, 1,500 feet deep, and hurrying off into the Bay. On the north rises a huge bare summit 2,000 feet high. On the southwest the Mission Peak, 2,500 feet high. On the southeast, across the narrow wooded-gorge, through which the river breaks into the valley, other fantastic peaks 3,000 feet high. On the east, the enclosure is made by a low, steep range of naked hills showing others, higher and still higher, behind them. A stranger, fresh arrived in May, at the Mission, takes his horse, for example, the next morning, and finding a road that turns into the narrow gorge, or opening of the hills near by, goes in to explore a little and find whither it leads. The steep, smooth-faced hills, or rather mountains, pile in with rounding fronts on either side, just leaving a passage between, and they are so lighted up by the sun brushing down their translucent surfaces of green, and tuned to such wild harmony by their many-colored flowers, that sight overflows, and he begins unwittingly to listen ; as if there must be something

audible, some hymn or note of Memnon in the scene. Passing a low summit, the beautiful valley opens to view, and such a combination of colors no eastern man or European has ever seen or conceived. The green is not what we call a grass green. Neither is it the pale bluish green of England, but a soft yellow green, covering the whole landscape, the steeps even to their summits, all the roundings and hollows, as well as the rich floor of the valley bottom, like an immense carpet of plush spread over the scene; which carpet is so matted with flowers in all the highest colors, sprinkled sometimes in groups, that we call it by this name without any effort of fancy—we can think of nothing else. No painter, practiced in our common styles of scenery, could manage at all such a picture, without much study, assisted probably by many failures.

Descending next into the valley, he finishes out the picturesque of the morning, in looking on a scene quite as new and peculiar as the scenery. In the extreme southern angle of the plain, just where the river issues from the gorge of the mountains, he observes a cloud of dust rising, and horsemen rushing wildly through it in all directions. Something brisk is evidently going on here, and he must needs find what it is. Approaching the spot he discovers an immense herd of cattle brought together from the hills, which the owners and their herdsman are either sorting by their marks, or which else they are sorting out, in sale of a part, for the market—they are Spanish, native Californians all, and do not answer English questions. This at least is plain, that they are gathering out of the great herd of a thousand or more, to make up another and separate herd a short distance off, and the lasso practice is the power. Riding into the herd and through it, they chase out one, turning him towards the new herd. But he runs by, and back into the herd, or he strikes out into the plain, in some other direction. But the pursuer is after him. Round and round swings the fatal loop or noose above his head as he goes, till he gets within reach, at three or four rods distance, when he lets it fly, and it drops with a kind of astronomic

certainly round the poor animal's horns. Feeling it fast upon him, the animal now turns upon his persecutor, and it is convenient for him also to fly in his turn—only keeping the cord still fast to the horn of his saddle. Another horseman follows immediately, and another lasso drops and is drawn fast. Now the animal, in a line between the two pursuers, strikes off, throwing his whole momentum, if he can, upon the straight line, at right angles to it, which gives him advantage enough to unhorse both of them, if they let him come to the blow. All three, therefore, now are in a race together, and as soon as this is seen, a third horseman is in pursuit, and throwing his lasso, he picks up a hind leg of the ox as he runs, doing it as easily as a knitter might take up a fallen stitch. This done, while the two others are spreading right and left, he darts off sideways in a prick of the spur, and jerks the refractory beast flat upon the ground; where he lies bellowing in fright and despair, held fast by three cords, at three angles, as little able to escape as a fly in a spider's web. Next a huge, fiery bull is seen rushing out of the herd, pursued by a small, sharp looking herdsman, who says, by a certain look of his eye, that he will show the green stranger a trick. Bolting into the plain, the mettlesome, tall animal, leads off in a race which puts the horse to his best speed. But as the pursuer comes up with him, he seizes the tail of the renegade, streaming level behind him, winds it by a quick turn round the horn of his saddle, and darting off suddenly by a spring, as if it were done by some concussion of gunpowder, he jerks the bull flat down and rolls him clean over! Whereupon there is a shout from all—but the bull; who gets up, as it were, in an effort of self-recollection, and walks off meekly where they show him the way.

We only add, as regards the scenery in California, that everything is here inverted which we commonly assume in respect to the effects of culture. Culture improves nothing. California was finished as a world of beauty, before civilization appeared. The magnificent valleys opened wide and clean. The scattered oaks stood in majesty, here and there, and took away the nakedness. Civilization comes, cuts down the oaks for firewood, fences off the plains into squares, covers them



with grain or stubble, scatters wild mustard over them, it may be, and converts them into a weedy looking desolation. The only attractive looking surface ever to be seen in California, is the native original surface ; for there is never to be a lawn, or a neat grassy slope, as with us, because there is no proper turf. Shrubbery itself can never be made ornamental in California, except where there is irrigation to maintain it. Where there is irrigation, a garden or house lot may be covered in with trees and set off with flowers, so as to be really fresh in beauty at all times, but this is not the kind of beauty that makes a landscape. In the mining country, the natural beauty of the scenery is defaced by another process. Here a thin but stately growth of evergreens is sprinkled over the generally graceful slopes and roundings of the hills, and a pure crystal stream leaps along down the trough of the hills, over cliffs of rock and pebbly beds. But the miner comes. Finding gold that will "pay" in the soil, he rents a head of water from the Ditch Company, whose ditch, bringing on the water from some level far up in the Sierra, flows it along from hill top down to hill top, and across from one hill to another, leaping hollows and ravines on wooden tressle work, sometimes even two hundred feet high, till it reaches a point abreast of his placer, and directly above it. Bringing it down the hill in an immense cotton hose, with a nozzle pipe like that of a fire engine, he plays it into the side of the hill, with a pressure of perhaps one hundred and fifty feet fall ; tears down the hill, acre by acre, and floats it off, rolling the loose stones with it down his wooden trunk or sluice, in which the gold is arrested, and so continues, till he has carried off a large section of the hill side, even a hundred feet deep. His neighbors are doing the same thing right and left. Pits also are sunk downward, and tunnels bored in level into the sides of the hills, and the earth from so many burrows, is piled at their mouths. The trees are cut down for timber and fire wood. The stream of the valley runs thick with creamy richness, and the cliffs and pebbly beds are covered fifty feet deep with stones and mud-washings. The result is a most horrid desolation, of which every line of the natural beauty is gone forever. If some

camp of demons had been pitched here for a year, tearing the earth by their fury, and converting it to the model of their own bad thought, they could hardly make it look worse. The whole mining region is finally to become a desolation in just this manner. There is no possibility of a process more delicate for extracting the gold. Indeed there seems to be a kind of prior necessity, which nature must needs recognize, that gold and desolation go together. What we see then, at the mines, only represents too faithfully what holds good historically in the moral desolations of plunder, fraud, and avarice, instigated by this treasure of the mountains. The only part of California, in short, that will not be damaged in its scenery by the arrival of culture, is the broken country of the coast region, or the region of natural pasturage; except that possibly the Artesian wells may be carried so far as to irrigate a considerable part of the valley surfaces. Thus, while there is almost no stream running through a valley bottom in the summer, because every issue from the mountains sinks immediately into the gravel beds of the plains, and runs under, it may turn out generally, in the narrow valleys, as in that of San Jose, that Artesian wells, sunk two hundred or three hundred feet, will bring it up, spouting into liberty on the surface. Two or three of the wells in this town throw a column nine inches in diameter, ten or fifteen feet high, discharging water enough to turn a mill and of course to irrigate a large surface.

It will doubtless occur to many, that the dry season of the year, which is the summer, must be a season of utter desolation as regards the scenery. What can be more desolate than a universal dry death? And if the water-runs, or ravines are green, if the chapparal on some of the mountains, and occasionally trees in the plains, that have the faculty to bore deep for their water, show a semblance of life, if the gardens which are irrigated show a patch of luxuriance here and there, like an oasis in the yellow desert, what after all is the landscape but a desert? Suppose then it were to be covered with snows two or three feet deep, and every solitary thing stripped of its green, would the scenery be less desolate? But this is our winter. The wintry, or suspension time of California is in the

summer, and the winter months of the almanac are dressed in the richest, freshest green. And yet the Californians all speak of beautiful scenery in the summer, and any one who has been there a few months begins to sympathize with them. Trees and chapparal are stronger marks on the landscape than with us, green spots, such as watered fields and gardens, have a fascinating freshness. And even the dry surfaces, in certain lights, make a picture, by aid of the shadows on the hollow surfaces, and the occasional green of trees and chapparal and gardens, that is really beautiful. The little valley just described, for example, puts off its green and takes on a dress of drab, velvety and soft in the glancing strokes of the light, and becomes for all the world a neat Quaker bonnet; only that the deep blue green of the gorges, and the lively green ribands that dangle down the water courses are a little too dressy and fantastic, and suggest a case of sumptuary discipline. The most that can be said of this Pacific hybernation time is, that while our winter is absolute, unconquerable desolation, the Californian can go into his garden, turn on the water, make an outdoor green-house of it, filled with all richest fruits and singing birds, and there wait patiently till the months of green return.

The growths of California are as peculiar and various as their climate. To make this subject intelligible, let it be understood that where there is no irrigation, natural or artificial, nothing grows perennially in California, except trees that have a tap root, and shrubs and grasses that have some peculiar kind of root that enables them to get sufficient moisture, where only a little is given. There is a coarse, perennial grass, for example, that is found, when dug, to grow out of perpendicular rootlets eight or ten inches long, which themselves grow out of large horizontal roots, that serve as water cisterns or sponges for the uses overhead. None of the common upland, or hay grasses, live through the summer, and therefore none make what can be called a turf. The grasses of every season are started in November, from the ripe seeds dropped into the chinks of the ground, in the dry season previous. It results accordingly,



that no crop can be raised in California, which does not ripen before the dry season commences, or by about the first of June. The only exceptions possible to this are made by irrigation, either where water is artificially supplied, or where, as will sometimes be the case, there is a supply from stores, or filterings underneath. It is only under these conditions that a crop of Indian corn, or potatoes, can be raised. Though an early crop of potatoes, ripening in June or in July, can be raised anywhere; and where the ground is sufficiently moistened from below, two crops a year are frequently grown upon the same soil. Potatoes of the late crop are grown too in some places near the coast, where they get moisture enough from the atmosphere and the fog, to answer their purpose. A summer garden will commonly make but a poor figure, unless it is recruited by supplies of water not contained in the natural soil of the place. The dry season is, in fact, the wintering season of vegetation, though it is the summer. Whatever lives, hybernates, rests. The strawberry, for example, ripens its fruit in April, has its growth, ceases, begins to look rusty, and passes into the state of suspension, finally to die. Let on now a flow of water, and it wakes, blossoms again, bears another crop, and passes into a second suspension, and then is ready to be awakened and bear a third crop. And so by alternating in times with different beds, a succession is kept up, and a bountiful supply is obtained from April to November.

The principal growths, or products of California, are accordingly the fruits and the cereals. Most of the fruits really want irrigation, though there are many tracts of soil in which they will flourish without, and will not ripen prematurely. The fruits are grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates, almonds, plums, apricots, pears, peaches and apples. Finer grapes are grown nowhere in the world. The apples are large and fair, and wonderfully precocious in bearing, but there is reason to suspect, from experiments made in the old mission gardens, that they may be short lived. Peaches, plums, and pears bear only too profusely. Indeed, there is a wondrous tendency to fructification in every kind of growth, animal and vegetable.

As yet, the fruits sell at enormous prices, because of the shortness of supply. In a very few years they will be plenty and cheap. And even now there is no city on the earth, where the fruit shops make as fine a show as in San Francisco. Considering the size, the fairness, the varieties, and all that goes to make a show of richness and profusion, there is probably nothing in the world, to match the displays of fruit in this new city of the Pacific.

But the great agricultural crops of California are the cereals, wheat, and barley, and oats. These are sown at any time, when it is both wet enough and dry enough to plow, between November and March; harvested any time between the ripening of June and the rain-falls of November; for they will stand uninjured, or lie, as left by the reaper, uninjured and without shelling, all that time; so that a small force suffices both to raise and to harvest a large crop. And the yield is from twenty to sixty bushels of wheat to the acre, subject to no contingencies but wet and premature drought, which latter only shortens the crop. Even one hundred and forty bushels of barley have been harvested on a single acre. Oats are said to degenerate in the seeding, but we have seen the stalk even twelve feet high. These crops, again, will sow themselves for a second crop the next year, and that will yield more than any crop sown in the Western or Atlantic states. Sixty or eighty bushels have been gathered for the volunteer crop of barley. This, in fact, is one of the evils to be encountered by California agriculture, that every crop perpetuates itself as a weed; so that no good wheat crop, for example, can be raised on a field once sown with barley, till the barley is exterminated; and one barley-sowing will sometimes yield three or four volunteer crops that are worth harvesting. Even potatoes will perpetuate themselves in the same way. Change of crops, therefore, is difficult. When the problem accordingly is raised, how or by what process exhausted soils are to be restored in California, it is not easy now to answer; but some process will be doubtless discovered in due time. In many cases this exhaustion will come to pass slowly; for the good soil is not unfrequently two, and three, and sometimes eight

feet deep. A piece of ground sown regularly with wheat for sixteen years, has been known to yield forty bushels and more to the acre. A single deep plowing, probably enough, would make it good for another sixteen years.

As regards the enormous growths of California, it should be understood that they are not ordinary. The ordinary fruits, for example, are not larger than ours, and where the trees are overloaded are commonly small. The extraordinary growths appear to be easily accounted for. First, there is a soil too deep and rich for any kind of growth to measure it. Next, there is either a natural under-supply of water, or an artificial irrigation. Next, the settings of fruit are limited. And then, as no time is lost in cloudings and rain, and the sun drives on his work unimpeded, month by month, the growth is pushed to its utmost limit. So a pear will occasionally be produced weighing three and a half pounds, or an apple-tree, or a cherry, will grow a stem ten or twelve feet high in a season. The mammoth turnips, onions, beets and cabbages, depend on a like concurrence. But these are freaks, or extravagances of nature—only they are such as can be equaled nowhere else. The Big Trees depend, in part, on these same contingencies, and partly on the remarkable longevity of their species. A tree that is watered without rain, having a deep vegetable mold in which to stand, and not so much as one hour's umbrella of cloud, to fence off the sun, for the whole warm season, and a capacity to live withal for two thousand years or more, may as well grow three hundred and fifty or four hundred feet high and twenty-five feet in diameter, and show the very centre-point or pith still sound, at the age of thirteen hundred years, as to make any smaller figure with conditions proportionally restricted.

The agricultural capacities of California, it will be seen, are very great as regards the rate and facility of production. The only drawback now experienced is in the want of a reliable and sufficient market. The mines and the cities are now the principal consumers. The result is, that if the product is a little short, the prices rise extravagantly, because there is no other supply. On the other hand, if it is a little over the

demand, the prices fall as extravagantly. And then, as the producers are flying always towards that which yields the best reward, every kind of product is likely to be overgrown in its turn, and so the prices become even more capricious, for the reason that they are capricious. When markets are opened by an outside commerce, as they will be, and when all the whaling ships are fitted and sent out from San Francisco and Puget Sound, the mischief will be repaired. At present, owing to this caprice of the market, agriculture is scarcely less of a venture, than mining.

Accordingly the attention of land owners is now being turned, more than before, to pasturage. The old Spanish breed of cattle is giving way to the new cultivated breeds most valued here, and large ranges of land are taken up in the hill regions, where immense herds of from one to ten thousand head of cattle are collected, which are yielding a rich revenue to their owners. These herds are kept sometimes wholly without fodder, and generally with very little. They fatten most in the summer, when the feed is dry, and only suffer, when the falling rains have rotted the old growth, and have not yet sufficiently started the new. Hence it is common to burn over a considerable portion of the ranges, just before the rains, that the cattle may be able to get access to the first sprouting of the seeds, at the earliest moment possible. The air, accordingly, is filled with smoke for many days; the mountains are flaming round the horizon day and night, as if the last day had come, and horsemen are rushing hither and thither to fight off the fires from the wheat fields and the pastures of the plains. And then the result is, that the yellow, yellow, ever yellow hills that were, as soon as a good rain has sprouted the seeds, come forth—green out of black—and the body of the high burnt hill or mountain, is turned to a beryl, without so much as a twig, or a weed-stalk, to mar the color. This great interest of pasturage promises even to exceed the plowing interest in importance. The home market for it is equally reliable, and the salted and dried meats, the hides, the tallow, and wool, are products that can take the world for their market.

The culture of the grape, too, promises much. Whether it can be successfully prosecuted without irrigation is doubtful, though it is well known that old, deep rooted vines will bear a crop without. It is commonly believed that California is hereafter to become the great wine growing country of the Pacific.

With so many advantages, it is impossible that California should not become one of the richest countries in the world, on the score of its mere land interest and the products yielded by its soil. It has garnered up also, in the soil itself, treasures that no other country can boast. It will take a thousand years to wash over all the pay dirt of the gold mines. It is computed also to have, in a single quartz lead, more gold, five times over, than is now owned by the whole world; and other veins are being opened, almost every month, which are ready to yield great revenues of profit, as soon as they are worked. The quartz mills, once supposed to be a failure, are now so perfected as to yield immense profits, almost without exception. The waters too of the mountain are a great wealth, and the thirty or forty millions already invested in the ditches, ought to be yielding a great revenue, as much of it already is. Besides, there are mines of quicksilver, such as make all other mines in the world comparatively worthless, deposits of borax, rocks of alum, hills of sulphur, quarries of marble, beds of coal and of iron—in short, there was never a country so underlaid with treasure of every kind.

The commercial advantages are not yet developed, and will not be, till the Pacific shores are lined with new nations, and the untold riches of their natural resources are brought into the circulations of trade. Even if a railroad were built across the continent, it is not likely that any very great amount of merchandise, or any but the most precious forms of merchandise, would pass that way. Probably there is a greater amount of expectation vested in such an improvement, than the actual experiment will justify. The distance is too great, the grades too heavy, (as heretofore reported,) the running expenses too enormous, to allow the freight of any common articles of trade.



And yet California is on the great water highway of the Pacific, and her Gate the certain goal of its travel. For it is remarkable that this Golden Gate is at the southmost limb of the variable trade winds, and that these, blowing in, a little from the south of west, and out, from a little north of east, will drive a ship directly out to China, or directly in from China—whichever way they blow—laying a straight course on one of the great circles of the earth; while, immediately south of the Gate, the winds begin to change character, and are much less available for sailing purposes, and continue to be so, even down as far in south latitude as to Valparaiso. Thus to sail a ship up the western coast of the continent, from Panama to San Francisco, would probably require a whole summer, and even that might not suffice for the passage. No ship can ever approach that shore by sail without falling into a contest with currents, which the light baffling winds and Doldrums make it difficult to maintain with success. To get in is difficult, to get away more difficult. And hence perhaps it is, at least in part, that one may pass down that whole stretch of coast, a distance of 3000 miles, in one of the California steamers, and actually not see, on the passage, so much as a rag of sail of any description. On the other hand, at Puget Sound, the only available harbor ground on the north, the winds blow off the coast with such violence, that vessels after pounding there for weeks together, till the crews were quite worn out, have returned to San Francisco to refit for a new trial. Besides in the winter trades, which are from the northeast, a vessel sailing from China for the Sound will have the whole distance to make, with a wind directly against her; while she might lay her course for San Francisco and straight in, without once shifting her sail.

Nature, it will thus be seen, has set her seal on San Francisco, appointing it to be the great commercial centre of that coast and ocean. Here rests the future axis of motion. Indeed it is hardly extravagant to imagine that, in some distant age, when the enterprise and the resources of that Ocean, with its islands and coasts, are fully developed, the Atlantic commerce will be a thing by the way, an affair of the outskirts.

All such expectations, it is obvious, must depend, in a great degree, on the political and moral condition of California. And here one very great danger happily is already past ; viz, the introduction of human slavery. There is no state in the Union where slavery could be worked to greater advantage than in California. Connected with this fact, we have also the concomitant fact, that the office-holders and political operators of the state have very generally been men from the South. To understand, therefore, even after the fact, how it is that slavery is excluded, is what any stranger will accomplish with the greatest difficulty. No inquiries he can make will quite solve the riddle. Some have spoken of the known weight of the laboring and money making classes, being always opposed to slavery, and silently constraining the politicians, who were not, to respect their position. Some have ascribed much to the personal influence of Mr. Fremont. Others have given the credit of the fact mainly to Capt. Halleck, sometimes called the father of the constitution, a gentleman of great weight and capacity, who is known to have been the draughtsman of many of its provisions, but has since that time given himself wholly to his profession as a lawyer, and withdrawn himself altogether from the game of political life. Be it as it may, slavery is forever excluded from California, and so from that whole coast ; and that without even so much as a word of debate ; for this article of the constitution was simply read and passed by consent, in absolute silence. What a fact of history, this, to be the child of silence !

California unites in its population great elements of diversity. The 50,000 or 60,000 Chinese simply stay as foreigners. The native Californian or Spanish race, comprises gentlemen of real respectability, wealth, and character ; but the inferior class of herdsmen and retainers that were, are more wild and vicious, and really more hopeless, than before the change of masters. They live on horseback, without contracting any friendship with their horses, which might raise them a little. They are cruel to animals of all kinds, cowardly to superiors, ignorant, superstitious, frivolous, with little prospect of being advanced to anything better hereafter.

A considerable part of the emigration to California, since we took possession, is made up of persons from the extreme west, who crossed over by the plains—the class who are called Border Ruffians with us, and which there are called, more or less derisively, Pikes, from Pike county in Missouri. They are, by no means, any such desperate, or ruffian class of people, as they are just now commonly regarded here. They are, for the most part, uncultivated and rough, crude in their notions of religion, and like all such people, coarse in their prejudices; but they have great honesty and frankness, their impulses are strong, and generally magnanimous. They really contain the staple qualities, or possibilities of a high character. They have true manhood, which is not to be said of every people.

Another element of the emigration is from the southern, or southwestern states, comprising many gentlemen, with their families, who are a great accession to the society and manners of the cities, and particularly of San Francisco; and, with these, a much larger, or at least noisier class of broken down politicians, who have fled, as it were, to California, to farm the voters and offices of a new world, where their stock of capital has not yet been exhausted. The former class comprises men who appear, like Mr. Stanley, to have emigrated rather to get away from political life, and to apply themselves to other pursuits. The latter, trained to public speaking and the management of assemblies, and having this for their trade, have hitherto been able to obtain almost all the offices of the state, and have distributed the rewards of office to themselves, in a scale of unexampled liberality. Happily there was an end to the credit of the state, and that limit has been finally reached. The bankrupt people too, are beginning to ask questions they had no time to ask before; competitors also are coming into the field, whose morality and trustworthiness in other relations have been already proved. The dynasty of plunder, therefore, is rapidly coming to an end.

Another large class of the emigration is from New England, New York and the Middle and Northwestern states. And these again are in two classes. First the merchants, bankers, lawyers, engineers, surveyors, and many of the head miners—



men who have come to California as to a field of enterprise, and who bend all their energies to the particular personal calling that engages them. Secondly, a class of reprobates in all styles and degrees, who find their way to California, just because they are not wanted anywhere. These are the fugitives from justice, the absconding bigamists, the felons and prison birds who want a new field where they are not known, defalcators, pimps, shoulder strikers and prize fighters, drunkards, sons that could not be endured at home, and vagabond gentlemen whose friends have been willing to escape the burden of their support, by giving them an outfit for some very distant region. These and such like characters were turned for a time, in shoals, upon California. But the pistol, the knife, the halter, the bad liquors, and the Vigilance Committees are scattering them rapidly and killing them off. They flourished for a time, as the under-fighters and ballot-box operators of the politician class just referred to; assuming the alliance to be one of natural good fellowship, inasmuch as they too use the tools of honor themselves. But their trade is gone, they cannot even be drunk in the streets, or draw a knife out of their pocket, without a painfully certain prospect of appearing in the chain gang the next morning. Meantime, the former and better class above named, with many of the better class from the South, are building churches, organizing institutions, looking after charities, and showing more and more distinctly that the great hope of California is in them. They will even consent to serve on juries, and some of them also to be named for public offices of trust and power, which formerly they would not. Time is giving them the controlling position, as by a kind of necessary process, and even compelling them to assume it.

The composition, or the combined elements of the emigration, it will be seen, are not favorable to the immediate coalescence of the new state, in terms of order and public virtue. Besides a good many hostile influences of a more special character, it will be easy to perceive, concur in detaining or holding back the new community, from the kind of civil administration necessary to its good name and social comfort.

Thus, in the mining towns, are gathered large bodies of men, without wives or children, living as cenobites in their dens, and no one needs to be informed that men, living separately from women, are sure to make a large stride towards barbarism. The occupation of mining is also more adventurous in itself, than consists with the best habits of application; for if the digging is a venture, why should there not be a venture at the gambling table, without the digging? It is not unfrequent that the placer mining gives out, and it is known to be always more or less precarious. Hence many of the towns are mere encampments, and are called "camps." And some that assumed to be more are already given up and nearly forsaken. Hence the miners become more or less migratory themselves, and their towns are too nearly so, many of them, to be much cared for, either in the building, or in the establishment of social and religious institutions. A stranger, too, will see a very distinct and significant character in the names given to places; such as Yankee Jim, Fiddletown, Jackass' Gulch, Whisky Bar, and a whole hundred names, of which, these are the choicer specimens. It appears to be the general opinion, that there is a decided moral and social improvement in the mining population. But one who has attended church for two Sundays, in a mining town of the very first order, finding about forty persons present to hear a good Christian sermon, and passing in the street when returning from church, in both cases, full five hundred men, who had rushed together as spectators of a street fight, will hardly think it possible that there should have been a very great moral improvement there.

Agriculture, too, has been connected, in California, with unwonted and even wholly peculiar causes of moral deterioration. The titles to land have many of them been so uncertain, or so far unsettled, by frauds and charges of fraud, that there has been a natural reluctance in emigrants to incur the risk of a loss, in purchasing the soil. Hence, also, in part, the very peculiar kind of squatting that has come into vogue in California, and probably a full half of the agriculture of the state is either now, or at some former time, has been

carried on, as an operation of squatting in this manner, viz, by taking possession of lands generally known to be vested in private owners by a title derived from the Mexican government, and not in the United States as in other new territories, where the laws of Congress authorize the occupation and make it a perfectly legitimate act. An American purchaser, for example, buys one of the old Mission properties, comprising a tract, seven or eight miles square, of the very best land in California, and everybody knows the title to be perfect, because the land has been held and occupied by the Mission, for more than fifty years. He expends over \$100,000 in fencing it, and the property rises in value so rapidly, that he begins to be rated and to rate himself as being worth, at least, a million of dollars. But behold, a cloud of squatters suddenly appears pouring in upon his lands, squatting inside of his fences and among his wheat, erecting their tents or huts, and leaving him to pay the taxes, while they reap the harvests. He is now the bankrupt purchaser and they are the occupants, till at least six or eight years of litigation, terminated at Washington, have established the title in his creditors, which everybody knew was in himself. Meantime they have gotten the use or rent for so many years, which is to them a handsome outfit. The old native Californians are treated in the same way. No chapter of wrong and oppression, in which our countrymen have had their part, is more sad or revolting. Even between the old ranchero's house and well, the squatter has taken his post and set up his hut. Then, assuming also that the cattle are wild, as that the lands are public, the squatter wanting a steak has taken his rifle and killed an ox. And so the poor herdsman has been stripped both of lands and herds, by these remorseless Sabeans, and that with airs of indignity and low-bred consequence, more difficult to bear than the robberies themselves. The truculent savage spirit generated by these land-piracies, will be readily understood. The tragedy of young Suñole is happily an extreme instance. He was a gentleman, educated, as we have heard, in Paris, equal, if not superior, in personal accomplishments, to most of the educated Americans.

But he ventured to remonstrate very gently with a squatter for cutting down the trees of his father's exquisite little valley in the mountains, and selling them for wood, giving him liberty at the same time, to cut what he wanted for himself; but the next time he passed by, on his way over to the ranch, in company with a friend, the savage came out with his rifle, got him in range as he threw himself over on the side of his horse, and drew him dead to the ground. Sheltered and secreted by others like himself, he could never be found. As the titles are now being settled by the decisions of the courts, the squatters are very gradually yielding to the law and becoming purchasers. All these wrongs will finally be a thing of the past.

By the very latest advices, it appears that the squatter combination is just beginning to yield some respect to the decisions of law. Heretofore the owners, in establishing their title, have commonly not gotten possession, but only a right to pay the taxes. Indeed, this third estate of squatterdom had sufficient power in the legislature, two years ago, to get a law enacted, requiring owners, when dislodging or ejecting them, to pay for the improvements, according to the appraisal of a committee from the precinct; a plan by which they expected to get back the value of the land; for the appraisers would be squatters almost of course. Happily the courts would not execute the law. And but a year since, the venerable patriarch of the Napa valley, who came over from Missouri as a trapper, more than forty years ago, having finally established his old homestead title, comprising eight or ten thousand acres of the best land in the state, was evidently beginning also to find a much harder question on his hands; viz, how to move the squatters without periling his life. And yet, among these land-pirates, called squatters, are a great many persons from the East, and even from Massachusetts and Connecticut; and, what is more, from our Christian churches; and some of them appear even now to be seriously minded and conscientious in their life. Because the same word, *squatter*, is used to designate this known act of robbery, (for it is often such and nothing else,) they really

suppose that they are doing the same lawful and right thing, which is practiced under the acts of Congress, at the West.

As the mining and the agriculture of California appear, thus far, to have been connected with unpropitious moral influences, so also it has been, even to a much greater degree, with the trade of politics. Composed of elements so various and repellant, it was not to be expected, for a time, that there would be much confidence in public men or proceedings. And the moral character of the political operators and office holders was generally not of a kind to inspire confidence. They were gamblers, debauchees, drunkards, men who lined their bosoms, not with virtue, but with knives and pistols. They were just such men, in short, as could never be in confidence, even if they violated no trust. The bullies they had in their employ, as inspectors of the ballot, could not swear to a true count and be believed. Juries were distrusted, because the panel was so easily made up, to include one whom the criminal, on trial, might "hang," to stand out for him in the verdict. The judges were such characters that they plainly ought to be bribed, if they were not. Administrators and trustees were suspected, as being appointed by the connivance of judges. Legislators and governors were distrusted also. This distrust became, in due time, a torment to the public peace, by its uncertainty; and none the less a torment that the worst rumors and suspicions were most likely to be true; till finally, everything bad began to be true; and the public prints to make a point of heroism, in dealing out their accusations with unsparing boldness. A stranger could hardly guess what it meant. Every print was for California. Nothing too laudatory could be said for it; meantime, as if a paradisaic whole could be made up of diabolical particulars, the sweeping denunciations of individuals appeared to have no honest man in it. And what was most remarkable in all these accusations, was that every charge made against judges and others of bribery, or of fraud, was given circumstantially; names, dates, amounts, agents, all stated with exactness. Probably a very considerable share of these charges of bribery, and perjury, and fraud, were true. But the misery was, that no one



could guess which. Society was dissolved and law reduced to an instrument of suspicion. It was a state most bitter and even horrible. Whether their facts were only suspicions and rumors converted into facts by repetition, or real and veritable truths of history ; whether it was the licentiousness of the press or its uncommon fidelity ; or whether, possibly, it was not all the fatality which attends every community where confidence is gone, no one could know, or satisfactorily judge. Be it as it may, out of this general distrust and demoralization, came the Vigilance Committee. It was raised by the torture that exasperates society when confidence is gone. So far not to sympathize with it is impossible, and the more that almost all the better citizens were in it. Even Christian professors left the church and the communion, to be in the outbreak, and bear arms in that vast congregation, gathered as a thunder-cloud round the jail, on the distant hill side.

It is not our design to discuss the committee. Suffice it to say, that their intent was good, their proceedings honest and carefully deliberate, and their military conduct admirably decisive and efficient. Their great fault was that they did not see their point exactly, and offered reasons for their action, a great deal worse than their action. If they had undertaken, not to administer the laws, or take them back into their own hands, but to restore the laws, by plucking down the usurpers, who stood in no right of law, being elected only by the perjury of the inspectors, their question would have been greatly simplified. Then, because of the almost impossibility of convicting the perjured inspectors, by any ordinary proceedings of law, they would only have done it by extraordinary ; and it would have been all the better if, to make a due impression of this crime, as the greatest of all crimes, they had sacked the whole tribe, be they many or few, and sunk them in the bottom of the Bay. Doing this, instead of resuming functions, the right of which strikes at the root of all constitutional government, they need only have insisted on some extraordinary means of restoring functions already taken away. The whole experiment was critical, more critical than our eastern communities know ; for there was a time, a terrible twelve hours,

just after the release of Judge Terry, when the question of a new Executive Committee, who should be more efficient and bolder, i. e., more bloody, was pending and apparently just ready to be carried by the whirlwind of passion outside ; which new committee, if it had not been dexterously avoided, would have been like the new committee of Paris, and similar scenes would probably have followed. The escape was narrow, so narrow that if the leading gentlemen concerned had now the question of a new vigilance committee movement on hand, they would probably hesitate long. And yet it must be granted for the honor of this same questionable, perilous adventure of reform, that San Francisco is probably now the best governed city in the union. The laws are now enforced, the economies are duly attended to, there is no plunder, and every evil doer stands in fear. It is the beginning, apparently, of a great moral reaction, which is felt by the whole state. Whatever may be true, therefore, of this great popular movement, whether it is right or wrong, wise or unwise, it will be impossible ever to turn it as a reproach on the certainly patriotic men who were foremost in it. They are much more likely to be celebrated hereafter, with Harmodius and Aristogiton and other great leaders of mutiny, that have been deliverers of their country.

We state these facts concerning the moral aspects of mining ; the occupation, by force, of lands known to be held by a legal right ; and the usurpations and perjuries and briberies of political intriguers and demagogues, connected with the general destruction of confidence and the necessary throes of violence by which they must inevitably be redressed, not as being, in themselves, any picture of California. We know that they are not. They are only facts, without which any description is rose colored and without sound verity,—such facts as will meet a stranger first, because they are most outstanding and impressive. And for this the reader will make due allowance, even as in reading any history ; for it is not the virtues and the smooth and silent flowings of goodness that make up ever the staple of a history, but the explosive wrongs and outrages rather, by which the evenness of good was disturbed. For our-

selves we regard these facts, not with any feeling of despair or discouragement. On the contrary, we perceive a certain sublimity, in the contest here begun and the clearing process going forward, which creates appetite in us. We know the certain victory, we see it coming, and we envy especially those young heroic spirits who have set themselves, in the love of God and their newly adopted state, to such works of duty and sacrifice, as are necessary to the sublime future they have in prospect.

Opposite to these facts that we have stated are others, which awaken our respect and inspire our confidence. They have a good and able ministry, for example, such a ministry as will compare favorably, in all the denominations, with any of the older states. They have churches in every denomination, not inferior to churches here. The attendance is good, especially in the cities, and the order, the dress, the music are only too much evened by the manner of the East.

The Sabbath also is becoming a more established institution, and to be without a Sabbath, as a day of rest, is more and more distinctly felt to be an oppression. And therefore the traders and shopkeepers, in most of the country villages, are petitioning the Legislature, more earnestly every year, for the establishment of a complete suspension of trade.

Education is not forgotten. The towns and cities are allowed by statute to tax themselves for this purpose, and many of them do it most liberally. The public schools of San Francisco are not inferior to those of our Eastern cities—many think them even superior.

There is no reason to apprehend any loss of natural vigor and tone from the climate on that shore. Some have taken it as a bad indication that the Digger Indians, (the aboriginals of California,) are the most spiritless and abject of all known tribes on the continent, and about the lowest specimens of humanity known upon the earth. But this may be sufficiently accounted for, by the general softness of the climate and the fact that they have never been required to feed themselves by the manly exploits of hunter-life; having always at hand enough of bugs, and fish, and sugar pine bark to serve their purpose. Sometimes also a degree of discouragement has



been derived from the analogical or symbolical fact, that there is not a stick of smart, hard timber in all California; nothing out of which an axe handle, or a spoke, or a felley could be made; every hardest, soundest tree, even the oak, being always brittle to such a degree ("*brash*" they say in California, and in New England "*spalt*") that the trunk will commonly break asunder five or six times when it is felled, and lie as a pile of fragments on the ground, even though it is three feet in diameter. Is this a natural token, some have asked, with a little feeling of superstition, that the future men of California are to be only a brittle or brash stock and without any real timber of endurance in them? Why any more a token than the giant pines, and redwoods, and cedars are a token of prodigiously tall men, a race at least twelve or fifteen feet high? Why any more than the often naked hills and plains are a token of no men at all? What other sign do we in fact require that the future stock of California will be a stock of high capacity, than that the climate is healthy, the growths bountiful, and that we are capable ourselves of the greatest endurance there, both bodily and mental, and have, in fact, a sense of robustness that we have nowhere else?

At the same time, it requires no gift of prophecy to perceive, in the physical resources and commercial advantages of that country, that an immense wealth is, in due time, to be developed there, such wealth as will give vigor to all institutions and works that require expense, and put everything on a scale of breadth and magnificence. If there is any country in the world where the future men are not to be cramped and whittled by close restrictions, it is California. At present the Californians say that they are poor; they feel poor, because they are now at the dead point of retrocession, where their extravagant expectations are being shortened in for that second beginning, which every new state and city has to make. And yet there is nothing more wonderful, with all this depression, than the amount of wealth already created on that shore. How many thousand years of day labor has it taken simply to build so many houses, fences, shops, steamers, ditches, towns and cities. Three of these cities, San Francisco, Sacra-

mento and Marysville, have so much of city life and character, that we hardly recognize their newness. And yet only nine years have passed, since all this immense wealth began to be created!—and that, 5,000 miles away, on the shore, as it were, of another continent.

There is good and cultivated society in California, such as there never has been in any other new state in the Union. The number of liberally educated men is greater by far, than was ever found in any other state of twice the same political age. Carpets, good beds, clean tables, bright knives and forks, courtesy, hospitality, public entertainments and pleasures on a footing of civilization—all these indications of comfort and society are widely diffused. One sign or token of this kind we cannot forbear to mention, because it signifies much. Passing hither and thither on the little steamers, up to Marysville, to Stockton, to the towns north of the bay, where often the number of passengers did not exceed thirty, we have seen, again and again, a table most neatly set, the silver bright and clean, the meats well prepared and good, without any nonsense of show dishes, the servants tidy, quiet, and respectful—in short, the whole figure of the entertainment more rational and better than we have ever seen, either on the boats of the Mississippi or of the Atlantic coast. Such facts indicate society, more than any most splendid entertainment gotten up by private opulence can.

One other consideration must be named, if California is to be well understood; viz, that with all the violence and the savage wrongs and dark vices that have heretofore abounded there, they seldom do a mean thing. They can perpetrate real atrocities, but they must be generous. A considerable part of their blameable profusion comes of their extreme jealousy of littleness, or meanness. Men really poor will often share their last dollar in helping a sick friend, or even a sick stranger. If a poor minister, whom they have only seen at their funerals, is known to be on short allowance, they will have a ticketed supper, not unlikely, to help him; which, if it is not the best way of establishing religion, does at least show their generosity. If a preacher asks the privilege of addressing them in a gambling saloon, on Sunday, they

are very likely to accede, to hear him respectfully, pass round a hat and make up a liberal purse for him, then put down their stakes and resume the play! The recent vote of the people to assume and pay the state debt was an act of pure magnanimity. Here was a debt of \$5,000,000 which was expressly forbidden by the constitution of the state. This provision of the constitution was known, discussed, openly understood, and the loan was obtained directly in the face of it. The money too had gone for nothing but to feed the political vampires, for whose plunder it was raised, and the state has not a vestige of property to show for it, but some old benches, that belonged to the state house at Vallejo. If then a people have any right, by constitution, to guard themselves against being plundered by their rulers, the people of California had a right to stand upon the restriction so prudently established in their constitution, and were under no obligations, whether of right or of honor, to pay this debt—to refuse was no act of repudiation. But their instincts were too generous, they had too much pride of feeling to insist on their right. Where Mississippi raised a quibble to get off from her honest debt, California took a gratuitous obligation to get it on, and to fasten it.

There remains a single topic to which, in the conclusion of our article, already too far extended, we must briefly refer; viz, to the effort now on foot to establish a College or University in California. The heaviest detraction, after all, from the future prospects of California, is in the fact that so many go thither only as adventurers, not meaning to stay, and that so many, often the most prosperous, are continually returning. And they do it, in great part, because they cannot educate their families there, as their means allow them to desire. In the first place, many never take out their families for this reason, and, in the next place, when they have done it, and their sons are grown up to the age at which they begin to want the best advantages, they return with them, and are so lost to the state as a family; for the distance and the moral perils of a separation from parents are so great, that there is no alternative, but a re-emigration. This begets an unsettled

feeling in those who remain, which makes them careless often of the good of the state, and, besides, it carries off a large percentage of the wealth created; for the families that return are commonly such as have been most successful, and all which they have gained is carried with them. And the probability is, that if the contemplated railroad were built across the Continent, (which it will not be for a long time to come,) it would scarcely help them at all, but might rather hasten them in this losing process.

What they want therefore at this time, above all things else, is a good College or University. Such an institution would do more to consolidate and settle their state, and to settle the confidence of their future, than even the railroad itself. There are no five states together in our western world, which, if they had none at all, would want an institution of this kind so much as California. For the supply of this want, some of their best and ablest men are preparing. They have had a charter for three years, organizing the "College of California." Their Board of Trustees contains a representation of all the Christian denominations, who are united in cordiality and good understanding. They are said to have lately fixed on their site—on the eastern side of the Bay, opposite San Francisco. They have had a preparatory school for three years past, under the tuition of Rev. Henry Durant, an accomplished scholar and a Christian, and the design is to organize a Freshman Class the coming autumn.

What then is wanted now is the endowment, and for this everything is ready. To obtain this endowment in California, except in part, will now be impossible. Much of the wealth is not in the right hands, and where it is not, where there is every disposition to aid, the possibility is very much reduced by the heavy loads of debt, which many who ought to be rich, are required just now to carry. When money will bring three per cent. a month, year by year, on perfect security, the lending party is not likely to put much of it in a College, and the borrowing party still less. Are there no great rich men in the East, no millionaires or less in computation, who will be induced to look at such an opportunity? Had we the

fortune of but half a million, in our editorial hands, we are quite sure of this, that whoever might want to assume the endowment of such an institution, would have to be very quick in his action, or he would lose the chance. What an opportunity for the man of fortune, who has no object in life, no family to provide for, or none but such as are already rich enough, and who would be greatly more ennobled by his name and example, as the founder of such an institution, than by all his property without the name. How many such too are there who are really meaning, when they die, to accomplish some great work with their money! Why not do it when they are living, and have the satisfaction of a consciousness enriched and a heart enlarged by their beneficence? To have one's name on such an institution as this, connected with the great history and with all the learning, and all the most forward influences of this new world on the Pacific, is a thought which might quicken the blood even of a man most sluggish and dull. For it is to win a greater honor, by many times, than to be President of our great Republic. That is an honor, which, as the line grows longer, loses more and more its significance, till finally, it will signify as little to have been one of the Presidents as to have been one of the Doges of Venice. But the other, like the names of Harvard and Yale, will brighten and gather to itself a greater weight and power, as long as the tongue itself may exist. And the satisfaction one may have in this honor is sublimely justified in the fact, that he is not merely to be known, or mentioned in the future ages of the world—that might be a very common ambition, for who is there who does even naturally desire as much?—but is permitted to know that his name is to be a power, and to work for all the coming ages, growing brighter and doing more good even than he himself while living. That is a legitimate and glorious ambition—the highest that a mortal can cherish. The Trustees, in the Appeal they published a year ago, placed the subject thus:

“Could some rich citizen, who can do it without injury to himself, step forward at this time of our beginning, and set his name upon the institution itself, by the side of a Harvard or



a Yale, by subscribing a large part of the proposed endowment; giving us an opportunity, assisted by his beginning and example, to carry up the subscription even to the highest point we have named, he would be enriched by the sense of his munificence, as no man ever was or can be by the count of his money. We have no delicacy in respect to the customary honors conferred by universities, when they set the names of their benefactors on the halls, libraries and professorships endowed by their munificence; or when they drop the dry, impersonal name of their charter for one that represents the public spirit, and the living heart of a living man who could be more than rich, the patron of learning, the benefactor and father of the coming ages. These are monuments that may well provoke a degree of ambition; not even an Egyptian pyramid raised over a man's ashes could so far ennoble him, as to have the learning and science of long ages and eternal realms of history superscribed by his name. And yet this better kind of monument is itself a power so beneficent, that he ought, even as duty, to desire it, and for no false modesty decline it. Such monuments are not like those of stone or brass, which simply stand doing nothing; they are monuments eternally fruitful, showing to men's eyes and ears what belongs to wealth, and what the founders of the times gone by have set as examples of beneficence."

---

ERRATUM.—Page 145, line 19. Instead of "whence *Cali—fornia*," read—"whence *Cali—fornia* (*Caleo* and *fornan.*)"

# THE NEW ENGLANDER

Is a Magazine devoted to the discussion of all the great moral questions of the day. It is intended to be an exponent of the views of New England men on all the questions which interest Christian citizens. It is under the control of a club of gentlemen residing in New Haven, Connecticut. Among their number are the President and many of the Professors of Yale College, together with some of the Pastors of the Congregational churches in the city. It receives also constant assistance and contributions from many of the ablest writers among the sons of New England in all parts of the country.

The Magazine is published in quarterly numbers, in February, May, August and November. The price is \$3 a year payable in advance. Single numbers, \$1. Subscribers can commence with the current year, or with any particular number, at their option.

Address all letters to

WILLIAM L. KINGSLEY,

Proprietor and Editor,

New Haven, Conn.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 167 265 A



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 167 265 A







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 167 265 A

